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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [GAZA](#) [DISENGAGEMENT](#) [ISRAELI](#) [PALESTINIAN](#) [AFFAIRS](#)

SUBJECT: SHALOM TOURGEMAN ON DISENGAGEMENT, ABBAS'S CAPABILITIES

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: Shalom Tourgeman, foreign policy advisor to the Prime Minister, spoke with CoDel Dreier March 29 about Israel's preparations for disengagement. He noted that while the GOI expects two thirds of the Gaza settlers to depart prior to withdrawal, the ranks of the resisters may swell to between 7,000 and 10,000 as anti-disengagement activists travel to Gush Katif for "day of" protests. On coordinating disengagement with the Palestinians, Tourgeman explained that disengagement had always been a "unilateral decision, not a unilateral step." The GOI is eager to discuss the civil and security aspects of withdrawal, he said, but the PA appears to be resistant to this. Tourgeman said that Arafat's death and the election of PA President Mahmoud Abbas presented new opportunities for forward movement on the peace process. Abbas's promises to Hamas and PIJ not to disarm them and to bring them into the political system, however, are in direct conflict with his roadmap responsibilities to dismantle terrorist infrastructure. End summary.

GOI Ready For a Fight During Withdrawal

2. (C) Shalom Tourgeman, foreign policy political advisor to Prime Minister Sharon, told CoDel Dreier March 29 that while many on the Right object to the disengagement, all of the parliamentary obstacles to the plan have now been removed and the GOI is preparing in earnest for evacuation. By the end of July, he said, some two thirds of Gush Katif's settlers will have departed the Gaza Strip. The third that remains, however, could be joined by thousands of West Bank settlers and anti-disengagement activists, raising the potential number of Gush Katif resisters on the "day of" evacuation to between 7,000 and 10,000. Tourgeman said the IDF will call in many of its reserves, and will serve the dual purpose of providing security to Israeli National Police (INP) forces who will carry out the actual evacuation, and preventing possible terrorist attacks during withdrawal. Israel remains determined, he explained, "not to appear as if we are evacuating under fire."

GOI Wants to Coordinate With the PA

3. (C) Tourgeman said that Israel has always seen its disengagement plan as "a unilateral decision, not a unilateral step." The GOI is eager to coordinate the economic, civil, and security aspects of disengagement with the Palestinians. Israel is especially determined that terrorist and extremist groups like Hamas or PIJ not take over settlement assets post-withdrawal. In Tourgeman's view, however, the PA "does not seem enthusiastic" about negotiating with Israel, something that he said will prove detrimental to the post-disengagement Gazan economy.

GOI Trusts Abbas' Intentions, Not His Abilities

4. (C) The death of Yassir Arafat and the election of Mahmoud Abbas as PA President represent an opportunity to move forward, Tourgeman said. Sharon trusts Abbas's own views and intentions, and the two leaders enjoy a strong personal relationship. Additionally, the PA has made some efforts on terrorism, such as dispatching PA security forces to the Gaza Strip in response to the firing of Qassam rockets into Sderot. Abbas does not have the capability to dismantle terrorist infrastructure, however, and without this there can be no significant progress. In his view, Abbas's Cairo assurances to Hamas and PIJ -- a promise not to disarm them, and to bring them into the political arena as legitimate parties -- are in direct conflict with PA responsibilities under the roadmap.

5. (C) While Abbas has assured Israel that, given time, he will find a means of dismantling terrorist infrastructure and that "in the end, there will be no Hamas or PIJ," Tourgeman said Israel does not believe this is possible. Unless Abbas acts now to seize weapons and make arrests, he explained, terrorist groups will continue to recruit and to smuggle weapons. He noted that militants have managed to smuggle five anti-aircraft missiles from Egypt into the Gaza Strip,

and although Israel has provided the name of the suspected smuggler to the PA, the PA security services have taken "no action" to find and arrest him. Tourgeman said the GOI fears a "blow up" of terrorism months or years down the road.

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